softening, the Indian basket having declined to around US $ 47/bbl in the week ending 16.4.2005.

With a view to containing the burden of the increase in international prices on consumers of diesel and petrol, it was decided that the burden should be equitably shared also by the Government and Oil Companies. Thus, Government reduced the excise duty on petrol and diesel by 4% and 3% respectively effective 16.6.04. Effective 19.8.04, the excise duty on petrol and diesel was further reduced by 3%. The Government also reduced customs duty by 5% each on petrol and diesel with effect from 19/8/04. In the Budget 2005-06, a reduction in custom duty on crude from 10% to 5% and in other petroleum products from 15-20% to 10% was announced.

Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have not passed on the full increase in international prices to the domestic consumer prices of these products. Although, with effect from 1st August 2004, Government had worked out a price band mechanism, allowing OMCs freedom to revise the prices of petrol and diesel within the prescribed price band, the steep and volatile increase in the international prices of crude oil resulted in the ceiling of the price band being breached within weeks of its being made operational resulting in the mechanism being placed in abeyance.

The pricing mechanism attempts to balance the interests of various stakeholders, *viz.*, Consumers, Government and Oil Companies. The burden borne by oil companies will, of course, go up to the extent that domestic prices are not revised upwards when international prices shoot up, but it is hoped that when international prices stabilize, or Government so decides, the price band mechanism might be restored. It may be noted that private sector companies are free to fix their prices.

Safety of women at airports

*365. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that airports remain unsafe for women;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken in the this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Various measures are taken by concerned agencies on regular basis to ensure the safety of women at the airports. These include regular advice to working women not to move alone in secluded areas at airport, surveillance by Close Circuit TV Cameras and plain clothes police staff, extra police pickets at vulnerable points, readily availabe assistance through Police Control Room vehicles etc. Separate frisking booths have been set up for women passengers. Women passengers arriving late in night are also offered retiring room/dormitory services for overnight stay.

Development of tourist places in Ajmer and Pushkar region

†*366. DR. PRABHA THAKUR: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Government of Rajasthan has submitted proposals to the Central Government for the development of tourist places in Ajmer and Pushkar region;

(b) whether the proposals include cleaning and preservation of the famous lake of Pushkar and sanitation of surroundings around the world famous Dargah of Khawaja Moinuddin Chisti, maintenance of link roads, construction of rest houses etc.; and

(c) the details of the decision taken by Government on these proposals?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) to (c) Based on the proposals received from the State Government, the following projects have been sanctioned by the Ministry of Tourism for development of tourist places in Ajmer and Pushkar region:—

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.